

THE TRIBAL NATIONS EXCHANGE

INFORMATION SHARING ON

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

ACTIVITIES IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Native American Coordination in Northwestern Division

The Northwestern Division (NWD) works with the Tribes of the Pacific Northwest and the Great Plains Tribes of the Missouri River. Consequently, NWD has developed a program and policy that reflects the Civil Works Tribal Policy Principals and makes it applicable to all district missions. The attached Adobe PDF file and Word file was just recently revised to include Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, and reflect the "Management" regulation series.



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A key element of the policy requires District Commanders to formally designate and train a Native American Coordinator (NAC). Currently, there are NAC positions established in all 5 districts of NWD. The NAC position in Omaha is a full time position located in the Executive Office, serving as a Special Assistant to the Commander. Seattle, Portland, and Walla Walla Districts also have full time NAC's, but the position is located in other office elements. Kansas City has a part-time NAC. NWD in Portland has a full-time NAC that also serves as the Portland District NAC. NWD at Omaha, has a NAC that is dedicated almost exclusively to Master Manual activities.

The NWD specialists serve as liaisons to Indian tribes and as advisors to district leaders on the Corps trust responsibilities as defined in treaties, Presidential Memorandums, Executive Orders, and Corps Policy and Regulations. The NWD NAC's work to support all district and division programs including: water resources planning studies and projects; Corps operating projects, Corps permitting under the Regulatory Program, cultural resources management, sovereign rights on and off reservations, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, land transfers and leasing, emergency preparedness & rapid response, Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation, Formerly Used Defense Sites and Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program

Submitted by Lynda Walker, Northwestern Division

Team Profiles

Editor's Note: This newsletter needs to be about more than laws & regs, archeology & NAGPRA, projects & programs. Our work with tribal nations is for people, by people. With that in mind, each month I intend to include one or more short bios on people in the Corps, people with whom we work, or people about whom we hear, who are making contributions in Indian Country.

To initiate this permanent column, I would like to introduce Ms. Tommye Owings and Ms. Sherry Firgens. Ms. Owings will be reporting next month to the Seattle District as the Native American Coordinator. Ms. Firgens is the Cultural Preservation Officer for the Stockbridge-Munsee Community of Mohican Indians of Wisconsin.

Ms. Tommye Owings has accepted the position of Native American Coordinator for Seattle District. Organizationally, Ms. Owings will be in the Environmental Resources Section but she will provide assistance and support to the entire district. Her most recent assignment has been with the Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan. Ms. Owings is a member of the Cherokee Tribe and has extensive experience working with Native Americans in the Central United States as a senior representative of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. She brings to the Corps a strong background in engineering, construction, surveying and real estate.

The New York District often coordinates with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community of Mohican Indians of Wisconsin for Corps projects in the northern New Jersey and eastern New York areas. The Hudson River shore is essentially the heart of Mahican (the preferred spelling) territory in New York, as well as being the heart of the New York District. We have been fortunate to have Steve Comer as a New York representative of the Stockbridge-Munsee to coordinate with on our projects. Steve will now be joining forces with Sherry Firgens, Cultural Preservation Officer, who is based in Wisconsin at the tribal headquarters. Ms. Firgens recently began working for the tribe and has as a main mission the task of becoming the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), a position for which she is well qualified. Sherry is an enrolled member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe. Before starting her new position she served on the Repatriation committee for the tribe, and is a member of the Historical Committee. Ms. Firgens spends much of her time in the Hudson Valley. Sherry may be contacted at The Stockbridge-Munsee Library, N8476 Moh-He-Con-Huck Rd. Bowler, Wis. 54416, (715) 793-3970.

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Information about Ms. Owings was provided by Mr. Mark Ziminske, Chief, Environmental Resources Section, Seattle District . Information on Ms. Firgens was provided by Mr. John Killeen, New York District.

Native American Heritage

Many of you know that November is Native American Heritage Month. You may also be looking for opportunities to inform and educate your Corps co-workers on Native American culture and heritage. The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian offers on-line services that can help you in ways that are easy and informative. The main NMAI website is found at <http://www.americanindian.si.edu/>. You can follow the website to virtual exhibits, <http://www.conexus.si.edu/map/exhibit.htm>. There are exhibits on Indian humor, Navajo textiles, and many other aspects of Indian life.

The Kennewick Debate Continues

The November / December issue of Archaeology magazine presents a Letter to the Editor by Mr. Christopher P. Henson of Wilton, Connecticut. Mr. Henson was responding to the magazine's earlier review of James Chatters' book treating his discovery of Kennewick Man. Mr. Henson complains that the magazine's review of the Chatters book "seemed lukewarm, as if the other side of this 'battle' had some valid points to make." Mr. Henson asserts his support bona fide scientists like Chatters" and states that "(t)he tribes claiming Kennewick Man's bones are ably assisted in court by a groveling Corps of Engineers and other assorted spineless bureaucrats . . ."

Some of you may still think the Federal District Court Magistrate have something to contribute to the debate. For you, oral arguments in the case were presented in June and the Magistrate is currently preparing his opinion.

Vacancy Announcements

The Corps Alaska District is currently recruiting for two individuals to fill positions as Alaska Native Liaisons. The position descriptions and vacancy announcements can be viewed on <http://cpol.army.mil/> . Both vacancies are listed in the GS 301 series, pay grade 12. The announcement numbers are 53EVC37371 and CE-02-200.

Chief of Engineers Visits Alaska District

Lieutenant General Flowers recently conducted a Command Visit to the Corps Alaska District. During his stay in Anchorage, the Chief participated in a number of ceremonies and received briefings on a wide range of issue areas. Alaska Native interests were at the forefront in a number of mission areas including the District's Regulatory Program, Civil Works activities and environmental restoration in the FUDS programs. General Flowers met with Lieutenant General Schwartz, Commanding General of the combined Alaska Command (ALCOM) and Alaska Native concerns were a focus of discussion. Near the end of the trip, the Chief of Engineers was the keynote speaker for the district's annual Celebrate Safety banquet. During the banquet a group of Yup'ik / Cup'ik performers invited the Chief to join in a traditional dance. With feathers in hand, the Chief participated in the cross-cultural experience and the Alaska Natives were impressed with his ability to keep time to the drums.